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Ober Tied To Fairfax CIA Break

By Allan Frank
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Richard Ober, National Security Council director for intelligence coordination, is the White House official who may be charged with violating civil rights laws in connection with a 1971 CIA break-in at a Fairfax City photo studio, administration officials have told The Star.

Ober, former CIA Director Richard M. Helms and other officials have been under Justice Department investigation for their alleged roles in the break-in conducted by CIA officials and Fairfax City police at a photo studio owned by a former CIA file clerk and her fiancé, a former middle-level Cuban propaganda official.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen yesterday acknowledged that a Justice Department investigation is under way on the break-in but refused to confirm that a White House official might be involved. That confirmation came from another administration source.

HELMs IS SAID to have personally approved the break-in and Ober is believed to be the person who took the plan to Helms, sources said.

Should Helms, Ober and others be prosecuted for the Feb. 19, 1971, break-in, they would probably be charged with a misdemeanor for conspiring to violate the civil rights of the studio owners.

A five-year statute of limitations applies to this type of misdemeanor, which carries a maximum penalty of \$1,000 and a year in jail. The break-in occurred in February 1971.

Ober, a CIA employee who has been detailed to the White House since March 1974, once supervised the CIA's Operation Chaos, which involved large-scale surveillance of dissidents in the United States.

Ober also coordinated at least one meeting between Nixon administration officials and local police officials about how to handle peace demonstrators marching in Washington, sources told The Star.

He was questioned in closed session last January by the Rockefeller Commission, on CIA domestic activities about his activities in the CIA counterintelligence office. Ober usually worked under James J. Angleton, the former CIA chief of counterintelligence, but frequently reported directly to Helms.

OBER ALSO HAS been identified by former White House counsel Charles W. Colson as the CIA official to whom E. Howard Hunt, the Watergate conspirator, frequently passed information regarding operations of the "plumbers" unit at the White House.

Colson said Hunt delivered sealed envelopes and packages to Ober, who relayed them directly to Helms.

Before moving to the NSC to work under Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, Ober was a career CIA official, the White House said at the time Ober testified before the Rockefeller Commission.

A 1972 Biographic Registry produced by the State Department says Ober, now 54, holds an BA from Harvard University and an MA from Columbia University.

The registry says he reached the rank of captain in the U.S. Army while serving abroad from 1943-46. He is listed as a foreign affairs officer for the Army from 1948-58 before joining the State Department as a foreign reserve officer for an assignment in New Delhi.

People who knew him in New Delhi say he was actually a CIA officer on duty there.

THE REGISTRY says he returned to the State Department offices here in September 1961 and stayed on until April 1967, when he became a foreign affairs officer with a GS-15 rating. Around that time, the CIA, under Helms' directorship, began establishing Operation Chaos.

Reached Monday by The Star, Ober said, "From the very beginning, I have maintained a policy of not discussing these matters at all and I am going to continue with that."

Yesterday, Ober added, "I really do not want to make any comment. I don't think it's appropriate."

Nessen said yesterday, "The White House is aware of a Justice Department investigation and if the Justice Department finds any reason to recommend a personnel action involving anybody working at the White House, they will notify the President."

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